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7-28-1983

Newsletter - 1983-07-28

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NEWSLETTER

98-908

July 28, 1983

Washington D C

VALLEY FLOOD WATER PROJECT UP FOR ANOTHER REVIEW. It's only been 20 years since we first began our efforts on the Lower Rio Grande Basin Flood Control Project, so you can understand my pleasure when any sign of progress can be seen. I only hope this recent benchmark won't be a spot to take another long nap. The current development surrounds the Army Chief of Engineers' Proposed Report on all three phases of the project. This report is being forwarded to the Governor and other concerned state and federal agencies.

There is a 90 day comment period in which the relevant parties can make suggestions on the Army's report. Along with the Chief Engineer's report, the findings of the Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors is also being sent to the relevant agencies and the Governor. After the comment period, the Chief of Engineers will put together a final report for submission to the Secretary of the Army, who will in turn recommend it to the Office of Management and Budget. Once OMB's recommendations are sent back to the Secretary, the whole package is submitted to the Congress.

For those of you who are amazed at how slowly the federal government sometimes moves, you'll appreciate knowing that my Washington office contains a 3 foot file drawer with nothing but Valley Basin study materials. Realizing that this project is so long in the making, I introduced legislation recently which would allow affected local entities to credit their own flood control work against approved Army Corps of Engineers' plans and the federal cost share formula. In this way, counties in our District can proceed with some portions of needed flood control work and have their spent funds credited toward the whole project.

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YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE SOME OF THE LITTLE BOY IN YOU. Not one fan in the 30,000+ audience could contain himself when Al Kaline and Brooks Robinson knocked their baseballs out of the park. Bob Lemon and Warren Spahn were the starting pitchers--and Spahn can still kick up that leg with a snazzy fast ball if I've ever seen one. Although two of my favorites were absent--Pee Wee Reese and Phil Rizzuto--Hank Aaron, Joe DiMaggio, Roger Maris, Smokey Burgess, Red Schoendienst, Ralph Kiner, Willie Mays and Joe Garagiola made us all feel like young kids again at the ball park on Sunday afternoon. Boog Powell and Alvin Dark were there, as well. It was the second annual Cracker Jack Old Timers Baseball Classic, played the evening of July 18 at the RFK stadium in Washington. I've never seen so many baseball greats in one place and at one time in my life!

—KIKI DE LA GARZA, 15TH DISTRICT, TEXAS—

This is the second time that Borden, Inc (makers of Cracker Jacks--that old ball park favorite), and the Association of Professional Ball Players of America have collaborated to bring this event to the nation's Capitol. That night, the National League old timers proved they can still engineer some dazzling double plays, and the American Leaguers responded in-kind with those first and fourth inning homers by Kaline and Robinson. The National League won it, 5-3. The winning pitcher was my old friend and former colleague, "Vinegar Bend" Mizell. He says he pitches as hard as he ever did, but the ball takes longer to get there! No one really cared about the score. The stars on the field were the only focus of attention. Each one shining in the hearts of his fans--the memory of an old baseball card come back to life. It brought out the little boy in all of us, and for me it was like seeing the old "Mission 30-30's" come back to life!

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SAN ANTONIO RIVER BRIDGE TO BE REPLACED. The San Antonio River Bridge on County Road 117 in Wilson County will be replaced. This is the word I have received from the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation. Residents of Wilson County have long been aware of the need for a first-class bridge, and the Wilson County Commissioners and the County Judge have been seeking just such a remedy to the ailing bridge they now have. I urged the Department to give them a new bridge, and the Department tells me that a construction contract will be let for the bridge sometime in mid-1984.

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INTERNATIONAL SERVICE WITH A SMILE. On July 18, a member of my staff made a mad dash by taxi to the Czechoslovakian Embassy in Washington. Why? Because the Embassy was holding two visas for two of our constituents in Jourdanton, and the Embassy needed an extra \$2 for each visa to fully cover all the required fees. They were scheduled to leave for Czechoslovakia two days later, and I knew those visas would never get to Jourdanton without a little help.

Like something right out of a "Harry Lime" mystery, my staff member approached the embassy door, framed with security bars, and a small face peered out at her from behind a smaller wooden door that opened at eye level. She was left in an ante-room, alone, with only a closed circuit monitor for company. You must understand, foreign embassies have their own style in these matters. After paying the necessary fee, my somewhat harried staff member sped over to National Airport and sent the visas down to San Antonio via TWA where our constituents picked them up. For our friends in Jourdanton, we say bon voyage and glad to have assisted. As for ourselves, just another flirt behind the iron curtain--a routine day in the life of a Congressional office!

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THE SUMMER GO-ROUND. Because the Summer months are always busy for Congress, and my staff calculates my daily schedule in blocks of quarter-hours, it's always upsetting to me at this time of the Congressional year when I miss visitors from home who drop by my office. During the week of July 18, Tomas Thomas and Geraldine Duke of McAllen were sadly missed; Judge Romeo Vasquez and the Jim Hogg County Commissioners from Hebbronville had to come by twice before we could connect. Mr and Mrs Sereno Beck of Zapata left me a note, and I was particularly upset to have missed visitors from Zapata County as they do not often make it up to Washington. I guess what I'm saying is please understand--Summer is a legislative whirlwind that keeps me flying. But you can be sure of one thing. My Washington staff rolls out the red carpet for our visitors from home, and that is a tradition in my office that will never change. Hard as they are to come by, White House tour tickets are a speciality for my staff to produce--sometimes out of thin air! And always we will escort you personally through the U S Capitol and provide you passes into the House and Senate galleries to view the day's action.

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A PERSONAL THOUGHT. Sometimes we wonder what it all means, and in utter frustration we ask what we're doing here. Well, on Tuesday, July 19, the Chaplain of the U S House of Representatives, Rev James D Ford, opened the day's official work with a short prayer that puts it all together for us. "We acknowledge, O God, that You have called us to be of service to others, whatever our task. On this day we remember all those who labor in this place, who use their skill and talent in ways that help others and ease the burden of each day. We commend to You those whose kindness and friendly spirit make such a contribution to our common effort and whose faithfulness enriches our lives. May Your blessing be upon us this day and every day we pray, Amen."

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VISITORS LAST WEEK. Rev Paul Streng of Edinburg; Mr & Mrs Sam B Gonzalez and Blanca E Gonzalez of Elsa; Mr & Mrs Romeo Lopez & family of Rio Grande City; Drs Morton & Monique Popek of McAllen.